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ABSTRACT

This report describes the demographic characteristics and educational experiences of immigrant students in New York City's elementary and middle schools. Immigrants comprise a substantial share of the elementary and middle school student body. Far more immigrant than native-born students are limited English proficient (LEP) and Asian, and far fewer are black. Immigrant students outperform native born students on standardized tests and have lower special education rates. Differences in school performance between native born and immigrant students are not completely driven by poverty. Within racial/ethnic groups, immigrants have lower test scores than native born students. Most LEP students are native born. Differences between native born and immigrant students are not driven by LEP status. More recent than nonrecent immigrants and native born students are LEP and Asian, and fewer are Hispanic. Recent immigrants have lower test scores and lower participation in special education. Poverty does not change school performance differences by recent immigrant status. School performance differences among nativity groups vary by race/ethnicity. Immigrant students from different regions of the world have very different characteristics. Two appendices present differences in school performance of region groups within poverty, racial/ethnic, and English proficiency subgroups, and countries by region. (Contains 13 tables and 17 references.) (SM)

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Who are Our Students?

A Statistical Portrait of Immigrant Students in New York City Elementary and Middle Schools

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Introduction

Major increases in immigration and the shift in immigrant origins over the past three decades have substantially changed the composition of New York City's public schools. Unlike their primarily European predecessors, today's immigrant students come from countries all over the world, speak a wide variety of languages, and present a range of educational needs and prior schooling experiences.[1] Where do immigrant students come from? How many are new arrivals to the school system? How do their experiences and backgrounds differ from the native-born?

This report answers these and other important questions through a statistical portrait of the demographic characteristics and educational experiences of immigrant students in New York City's elementary and middle schools. In this report, the terms immigrant and foreign-born are used interchangeably to refer to students who were not born on United States territory. We begin by describing the composition of immigrant students in our schools, including where they were born and how recently they entered the school system (section one). We then compare the demographic characteristics and school performance of immigrant and native-born students, with additional comparisons of native-born and immigrant students within racial/ethnic, poverty, and English proficiency subgroups (section two). The paper then considers differences within the immigrant population. In particular, we compare recent and other immigrant students (section three) and immigrants born in different regions of the world (section four). In each section, we present descriptive tables and figures that can be interpreted by readers without statistical training and endnotes for detailed descriptions of the data used. We conclude with a brief summary of what we learn from this descriptive profile of New York City students and a discussion of how this profile differs or resembles findings from previous research.

Section One: Numbers and Origins of Immigrant Students

This section provides an overview of immigrant students in the city's elementary and middle schools. These figures, and all others in this report, are based upon analysis of student-level data provided by the New York City Department of Education on all students in elementary and middle schools in the 1999-2000 school year.[ii] Due to the large sample size, all noted differences are statistically significant at the 5% level.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Immigrant students comprise a substantial share of the elementary and middle school student body (Table 1, Figures 1a and 1b).**

Of the roughly 660,000 elementary and middle school students in New York City schools, almost 16% are immigrants, and approximately 43% of these immigrant students are recent immigrants. Recent immigrants are foreign-born students who have been in the United States school system for less than three years, a group for whom schools receive federal funding for assistance in the transition from home to host country.[iii] The city's foreign-born students come from all over the world, with the largest group originating in one dominant sending country: the Dominican Republic (19%).[iv] In addition to serving many immigrant students from Caribbean, Latin American, and Asian countries, New York City is home to a large population of students from the Former Soviet Union.

Figure 1a: Nativity Composition

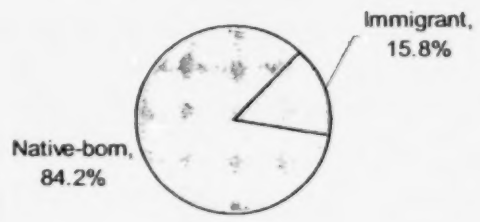

Figure 1b: Immigrant Students' Birth Regions

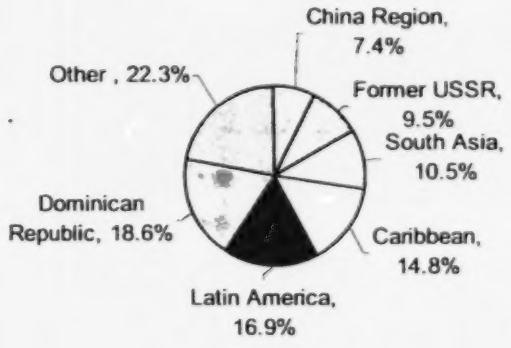

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Table 1: Characteristics of New York City Elementary and Middle School Students, 1999-2000

	Number of students	Percent of students
Total Students	658,591	100%
Native-born	554,331	84.2%
Immigrant	104,260	15.8%
		100%
Characteristics of Immigrants		
Recent immigrant	44,760	42.9%
Nonrecent immigrant	59,500	57.1%
		100%
Former USSR	9,907	9.5%
Other East Europe	4,376	4.2%
West Europe	2,852	2.7%
China Region	7,691	7.4%
East Asia/Pacific	4,834	4.6%
South Asia	10,917	10.5%
West Asia/North Africa	3,209	3.1%
SubSaharan Africa	2,807	2.7%
Dominican Republic	19,403	18.6%
Caribbean	15,388	14.8%
Caribbean South America	5,221	5.0%
Latin America	17,655	16.9%
		100%

Notes: Immigrants are students not born on U.S. soil. Recent immigrants are immigrant students who have been in the U.S. school system for less than three years. Sample includes students registered on October 31, 1999 in the 1st through 8th and full-time special education grades: 488 students were excluded because their birthplace was missing or unknown.

- **Immigrant students were born in 192 countries, territories, and provinces but most come from 15 countries (Table 2).**

The regions provided in Table 1 mask the substantial number of countries, territories, and provinces represented in the city's foreign-born students.[v] Some countries, such as Guadeloupe and Seychelles, are represented by only a few students. Yet almost three-quarters come from just 15 dominant sending countries. The Dominican Republic far surpasses the other nations in numbers with almost 20,000 students. The next three largest sending countries are Russia, Jamaica, and China, each with populations of almost 7,000 students.

Table 2: Top 15 Sending Countries of Immigrant Students, 1999-2000

	Number of students	Percent of students
Dominican Republic	19,403	18.6%
Russian	6,945	6.7%
Jamaica	6,700	6.4%
China	6,532	6.3%
Mexico	5,561	5.3%
Guyana	5,036	4.8%
Bangladesh	3,963	3.8%
Trinidad & Tobago	3,775	3.6%
Pakistan	3,589	3.4%
Ecuador	3,486	3.3%
India	3,365	3.2%
Columbia	2,717	2.6%
Haiti	2,364	2.3%
South Korea	2,214	2.1%
Ukraine	1,480	1.4%
Other	27,130	26.1%
Total	104,260	100.0%

Section Two: Differences in Characteristics and School Performance by Nativity

In this section, we explore the differences between native-born and immigrant students in terms of their demographic characteristics and school performance. We then examine differences between the native-born and immigrant students within racial/ethnic, poverty, English proficiency subgroups.

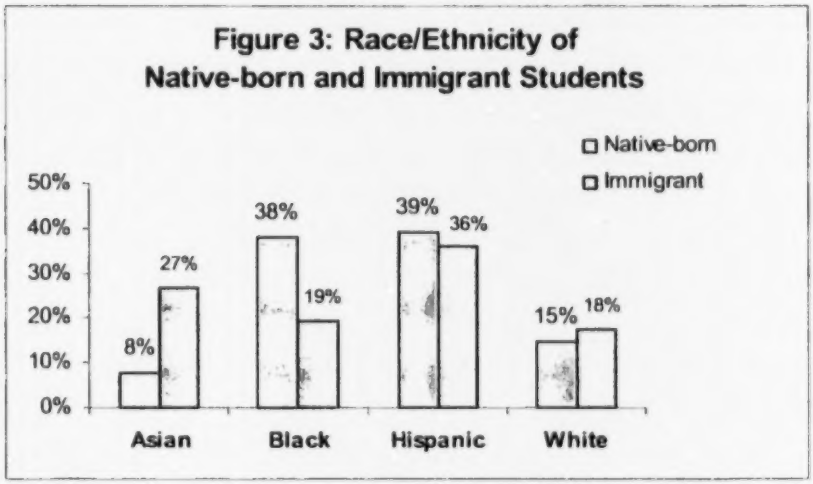
- **A far higher percentage of immigrant than native-born students are Limited English Proficient and Asian, and a far lower percentage are black (Table 3, Figure 3).**[vi]

For instance, approximately 27% of immigrants are Asian in comparison to only 8% of native-born students. In contrast, roughly 38% of native-born students and 19% of immigrant students are black. Additionally, approximately 30% of all foreign-born are limited English proficient (LEP) while only 7% of native-born students (almost 39,000 students) are LEP.

Table 3: Characteristics by Nativity, 1999-2000

	% Limited English Proficient	% Poor	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% White
Native-born	7.0%	85.7%	7.9%	37.9%	39.0%	14.8%
Immigrant	30.1%	89.6%	26.9%	19.3%	36.0%	17.5%
All (n=658,951)	10.7%	86.3%	10.9%	35.0%	38.5%	15.2%

Notes: Students are identified as Limited English Proficient if they score at or below the 40th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery. Poor students are those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch: the percentages poor are calculated as a fraction of the students with nonmissing data. Approximately 5% of all groups are missing data for free or reduced-price lunch eligibility. The racial/ethnic groups left out of the table include Native Americans, "other" ethnic groups, and students who did not provide their ethnicity.



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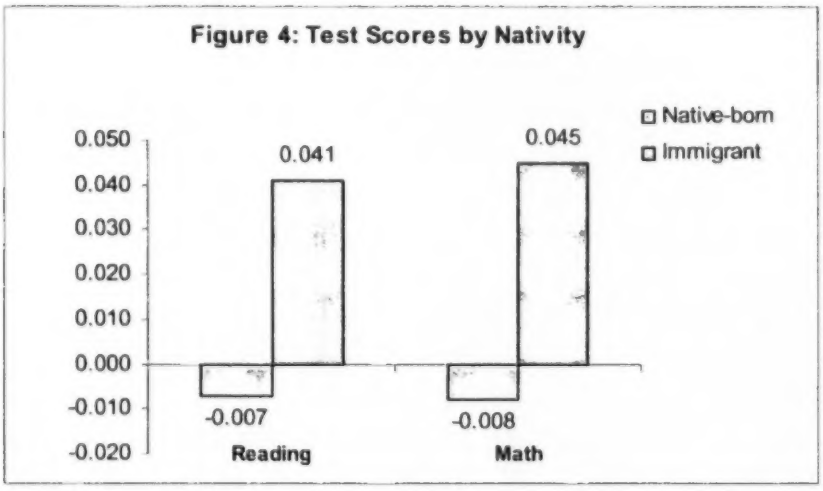
- **Immigrant students outperform native-born students on standardized tests and have lower rates of participation in special education (Table 4, Figure 4)**

We examine four school outcomes, two that reflect the services students' receive for disabilities (full and part time special education) and another two that reflect their academic performance (reading and math test scores).[vii] Full-time special education programs are for students with moderate to severe disabilities, such as blindness, while part-time special education programs serve students with less severe disabilities, such as speech impediments. Reading and math achievement test scores are for 3rd through 8th graders only and are measured in units that capture students' performance relative to other test-takers in their grade (these scores have an overall mean of zero and a standard deviation of one).[viii] In addition to providing test scores, the table includes the percentage of all 3rd to 8th graders in the group who took the exams. One reason students do not take exams is that they are LEP.[ix] These analyses reveal that native-born students are classified as special education at twice the rate of immigrants. Additionally, immigrant students outperform native-born students in both reading and math, on average, and fewer of them take the exams perhaps due to their higher LEP rates.

Table 4: School Performance by Nativity, 1999-2000

	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average math test	% Took math test
Native-born	5.9%	7.2%	-0.007	93%	-0.008	94%
Immigrant	2.5%	3.1%	0.041	68%	0.045	78%
All (n=658,951)	5.4%	6.5%	0.000	89%	0.000	91%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.



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WITHIN GROUP FINDINGS

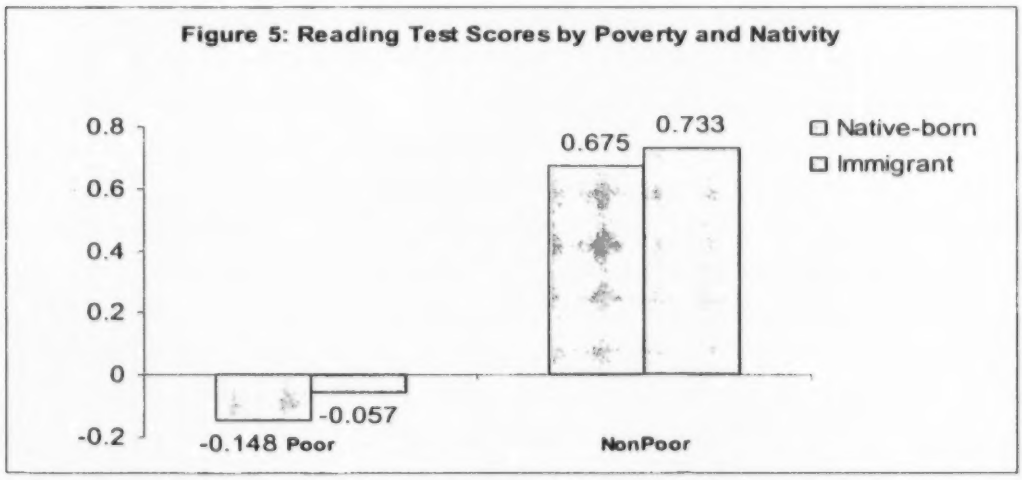
- **Differences in school performance between native-born and immigrant students are not completely driven by poverty (Table 5, Figure 5).**

The higher test scores and lower special education rates found among foreign-born earlier remain within both the poor and nonpoor groups. For example, the immigrant rate of participation in full-time special education is still roughly half that of the native-born rate among the poor (2.7% versus 6.7%) and the nonpoor (0.9% versus 1.6%). Additionally, test score differences by poverty status are far greater than those by nativity status. For instance, the difference in the average reading score between poor native-born and poor immigrant students is 0.091 while between poor and nonpoor immigrants it is 0.790.[x]

Table 5: School Performance by Poverty and Nativity, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took math test
Poor							
Native-born	83.6%	6.7%	7.4%	-0.148	93%	-0.141	94%
Immigrant	16.4%	2.7%	3.2%	-0.057	67%	-0.040	77%
All (n=538,028)	100%	6.1%	6.7%	-0.134	88%	-0.125	91%
NonPoor							
Native-born	88.1%	1.6%	5.7%	0.675	97%	0.662	97%
Immigrant	11.9%	0.9%	2.8%	0.733	83%	0.808	84%
All (n=85,502)	100%	1.5%	5.3%	0.682	95%	0.679	95%

Notes: Poor students are those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.



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- **Within racial/ethnic groups, immigrant students have *lower* test scores than native-born students (Table 6, Figure 6).**

Among black, Asian, and Hispanic students, the native-born outperform immigrants on reading and math exams. Among whites, native-born students score higher than immigrants in reading, but not in math. The earlier finding in Table 4, that immigrant students as a group outperform native-born students, results from differences in the racial/ethnic compositions of the two groups: immigrant students have higher test scores because they have higher shares of white and Asian students, the two racial/ethnic groups that test well. Similar to the pattern found in Tables 4 and 5, foreign-born students have lower rates of participation in special education programs within each of the racial/ethnic groups. The differences between native-born and foreign-born are much smaller among Asians: immigrant and native-born Asian students have similar rates of participation in full-time special education, 1.2% and 1.3% respectively.

Figure 6: Reading Test Scores by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity

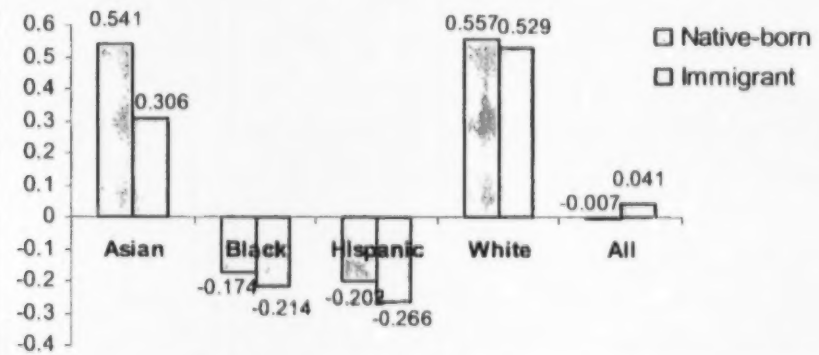

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Table 6: School Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took Math test
Asian							
Native-born	61.0%	1.3%	3.4%	0.541	96%	0.806	96%
Immigrant	39.0%	1.2%	2.3%	0.306	64%	0.530	68%
All(n=71,801)	100%	1.3%	3.0%	0.462	82%	0.709	84%
Black							
Native-born	91.3%	7.1%	6.6%	-0.174	95%	-0.250	94%
Immigrant	8.7%	3.5%	3.7%	-0.214	85%	-0.289	87%
All(n=230,435)	100%	6.8%	6.3%	-0.177	94%	-0.254	94%
Hispanic							
Native-born	85.2%	6.8%	7.9%	-0.202	90%	-0.180	92%
Immigrant	14.8%	3.6%	3.4%	-0.266	60%	-0.352	82%
All(n=253,744)	100%	6.3%	7.3%	-0.210	85%	-0.208	91%
White							
Native-born	81.7%	3.1%	8.6%	0.557	97%	0.560	96%
Immigrant	18.3%	1.4%	3.2%	0.529	74%	0.701	74%
All(n=100,021)	100%	2.8%	7.6%	0.552	92%	0.583	92%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.

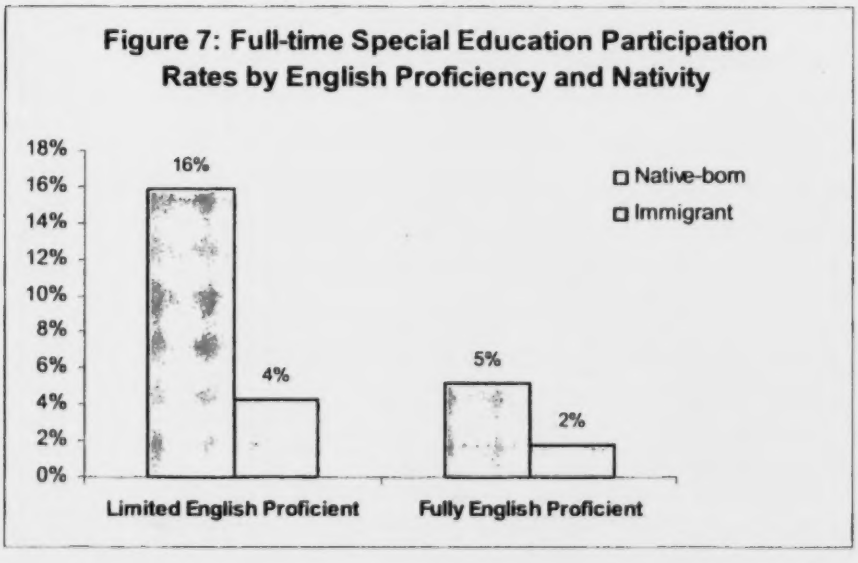
- **The majority of LEP students are native-born and differences between native-born and foreign-born students are not driven by LEP status (Table 7, Figure 7).**

Over 55% of LEP students are native-born. Additionally, the combination of being native-born and LEP increases special education placement to almost 16%, which is four times higher than the rate among foreign-born LEP students. On test scores, immigrants who are LEP perform far below average but they still score less worse than their native-born peers who are LEP. Notice that relatively few of the foreign-born LEP students actually take the tests (22% in reading and 52% in math), thus, those who might have performed poorly are not taking the exams.

Table 7: School Performance by English Proficiency and Nativity, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average math test	% Took math test
Limited English Proficient							
Native-born	55.4%	15.9%	9.1%	-1.311	63%	-1.036	81%
Immigrant	44.6%	4.3%	2.8%	-1.242	22%	-0.842	52%
All (n=70,384)	100%	10.7%	6.3%	-1.289	39%	-0.947	65%
Fully English Proficient							
Native-born	87.6%	5.2%	7.0%	0.040	95%	0.039	95%
Immigrant	12.4%	1.8%	3.3%	0.173	88%	0.266	88%
All (n=588,207)	100%	4.8%	6.6%	0.058	94%	0.070	94%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.



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Section Three: Differences in Characteristics and School Performance by Recent Immigrant Status

The previous section compared native-born to immigrant students as a group and within subgroups according to their backgrounds. We now turn to the experiences of recent immigrants, defined as students who have been in the U.S. school system for less than three years. Recent immigrants often face particular difficulties at school because of their lack of familiarity with the language, the culture, and the formal school system. In this section, we compare recent immigrants to their less recent foreign-born peers as well as to native-born students. We also determine whether there are differences across these three groups within racial/ethnic and poverty subgroups.

KEY FINDINGS

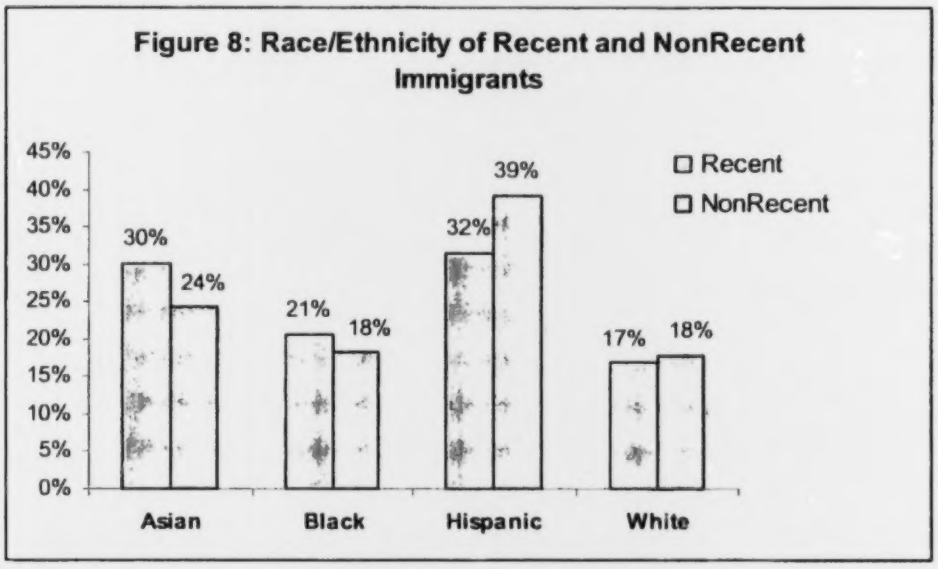
- **A higher percentage of recent immigrants than nonrecent immigrants and native-born students are LEP and Asian, and conversely, a lower percentage are Hispanic (Table 8, Figure 8).**

Not surprisingly, a higher percentage of recent immigrants (46.6%) than other immigrant students (19.2%) and native-born students (7.0%) are LEP. It is also interesting to note that after at least three years of being in the school system only 19% of immigrant students are not completely proficient in English. There is also a small difference in the poverty rates of recent and nonrecent immigrants, and larger differences in race/ethnicity.

Table 8: Characteristics by Recent Immigrant Status, 1999-2000

		Percentage of students who are:					
	% of students	Limited English Proficient	Poor	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Native-born	84.2%	7.0%	85.6%	7.9%	37.9%	39.0%	14.8%
Immigrant	–	30.1%	89.7%	26.9%	19.3%	36.0%	17.5%
Recent	6.8%	46.6%	90.7%	30.2%	20.7%	31.6%	16.9%
NonRecent	9.0%	19.2%	88.9%	24.3%	18.3%	39.3%	17.9%
All (n=658,951)	100%	10.7%	86.3%	10.9%	35.0%	38.5%	15.2%

Notes: Recent immigrants are immigrant students who have been in the U.S. school system for less than three years. Poor students are those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.



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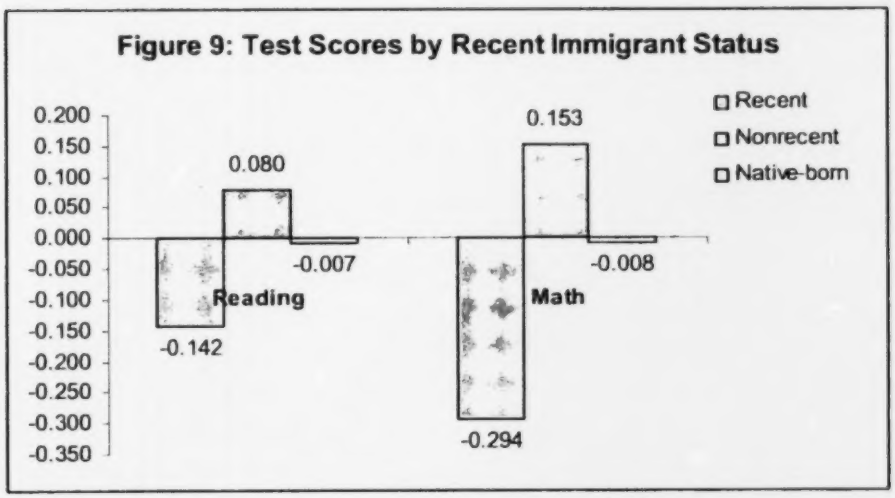
- **Recent immigrants have lower test scores, but also lower rates of participation in special education than nonrecent immigrant and native-born students (Table 9, Figure 9).**

The special education rates among recent immigrants are extremely low, at less than 1%, while those of the nonrecent immigrant students are closer to the rates of special education among native-born students. The recent immigrants who take the reading and math tests (97% of whom are fully English proficient, not shown in table) perform much worse than their nonrecent peers. Interestingly, nonrecent immigrants do exceptionally well on their tests, far better than the native-born.

Table 9: School Performance by Recent Immigrant Status, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took math test
Native-born	84.2%	5.9%	7.2%	-0.007	93%	-0.008	94%
Immigrant	–	2.5%	3.1%	0.041	68%	0.045	78%
Recent	6.8%	0.7%	0.8%	-0.142	35%	-0.294	55%
NonRecent	9.0%	3.9%	4.9%	0.080	85%	0.153	89%
All	100%	5.4%	6.5%	0.000	89%	0.000	91%

Notes: Recent immigrants are immigrant students who have been in the U.S. school system for less than three years. Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.



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WITHIN-GROUP FINDINGS

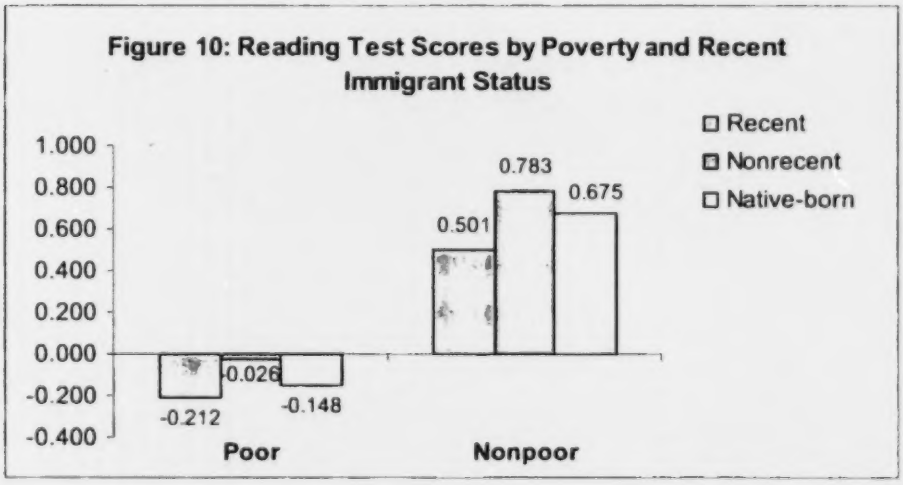
- **Poverty does not change the school performance differences by recent immigrant status (Table 10, Figure 10).**

Among the poor and the nonpoor, recent immigrants still participate less in special education programs than nonrecent immigrants and native-born students. Moreover, recent immigrants have lower test scores than other immigrant students, whether they are poor or not.

Table 10: School Performance by Poverty and Recent Immigrant Status, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math Test	% Took math test
Poor							
Native-born	83.6%	6.7%	7.4%	-0.148	94%	-0.141	93%
Immigrant	--	2.7%	3.2%	-0.057	67%	-0.040	77%
Recent	6.9%	0.7%	0.8%	-0.212	33%	-0.345	54%
NonRecent	9.5%	4.2%	5.0%	-0.026	84%	0.052	89%
All (n=538,028)	100%	6.1%	6.7%	-0.134	88%	-0.125	91%
NonPoor							
Native-born	88.1%	1.6%	5.7%	0.675	97%	0.662	97%
Immigrant	--	0.9%	2.8%	0.733	84%	0.808	83%
Recent	4.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.501	54%	0.560	58%
NonRecent	7.4%	1.3%	4.0%	0.783	94%	0.866	94%
All (n=85,502)	100%	1.5%	5.3%	0.682	95%	0.679	95%

Notes: Poor students are those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.



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- **The school performance differences among nativity groups vary by race/ethnicity (Table 11, Figure 11).**

For instance, black students who are nonrecent immigrants outperform their native-born counterparts on both exams. And Hispanic students who are recent immigrants have higher reading test scores than both nonrecent immigrants and native-born students, while white students who are recent immigrants have higher reading scores than nonrecent immigrants. Only a handful of the Hispanic recent immigrants actually take the reading tests (12%) but a fair share of white recent immigrants (55%) do so. Within racial/ethnic groups, recent immigrants are, again, less in special education programs than nonrecent immigrants and native-born students. The percentage of nonrecent immigrants in special education approaches, and in the case of Asians, exceeds that of native-born: for example, a higher percentage of Asian nonrecent immigrants (4%) than native-born Asians (3.4%) are in part-time special education.

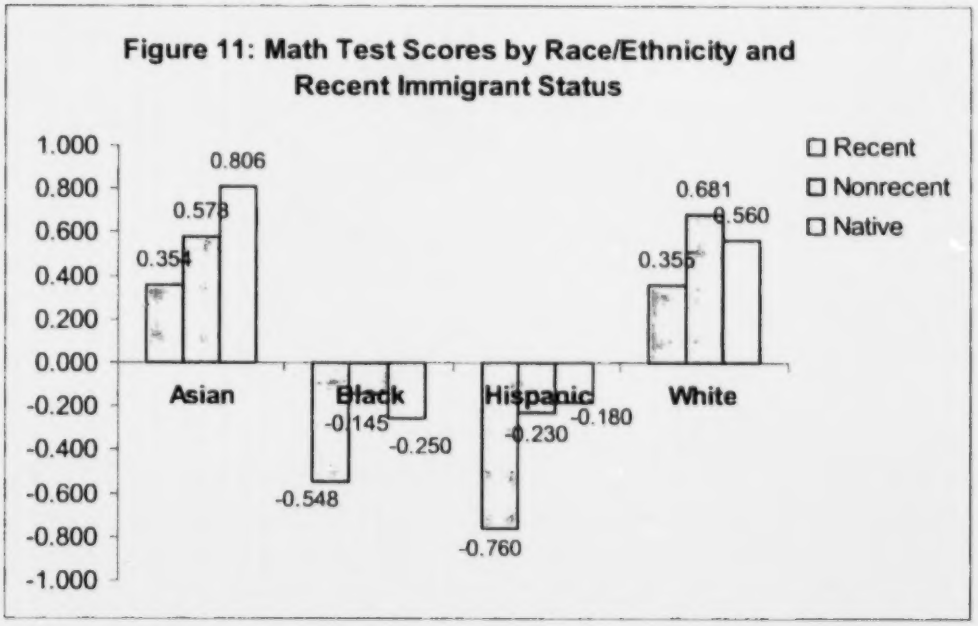

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Table 11: School Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Recent Immigrant Status, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average math test	% Took Math test
Asian							
Native-born	61.0%	1.3%	3.4%	**0.541**	96%	**0.806**	96%
Immigrant	--	1.2%	2.3%	0.306	69%	0.530	64%
Recent	18.9%	**0.4%**	**0.6%**	0.152	28%	0.354	37%
NonRecent	20.1%	2.0%	4.0%	0.338	86%	0.578	87%
All (n=71,801)	100%	1.3%	3.0%	0.462	82%	0.709	84%
Black							
Native-born	91.3%	7.1%	6.6%	-0.174	94%	-0.250	95%
Immigrant	--	3.5%	3.7%	-0.214	87%	-0.289	85%
Recent	4.0%	**1.5%**	**1.4%**	-0.530	74%	-0.548	78%
NonRecent	4.7%	5.1%	5.6%	**-0.047**	92%	**-0.145**	92%
All (n=230,435)	100%	6.8%	6.3%	-0.177	94%	-0.254	94%
Hispanic							
Native-born	85.2%	6.8%	7.9%	-0.202	90%	**-0.180**	92%
Immigrant	--	3.6%	3.4%	-0.266	60%	-0.352	82%
Recent	5.6%	**0.6%**	**0.5%**	**-0.060**	12%	-0.760	66%
NonRecent	9.2%	5.4%	5.2%	-0.278	79%	-0.230	88%
All (n=253,744)	100%	6.3%	7.3%	-0.210	85%	-0.208	91%
White							
Native-born	81.7%	3.1%	8.6%	**0.557**	97%	0.560	96%
Immigrant	--	1.4%	3.2%	0.529	74%	**0.701**	74%
Recent	7.6%	**0.3%**	**0.7%**	0.553	35%	0.355	82%
NonRecent	10.7%	2.2%	4.9%	0.525	92%	0.681	91%
All (n=100,021)	100%	2.8%	7.6%	0.552	92%	0.583	92%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers. The groups with the lowest percentage of students in special education and the highest test scores are bolded.

Section Four: Differences in Characteristics and School Performance by Birth Region

Comparisons of native-born students to immigrants and recent immigrants revealed the importance of nativity in schooling experiences. This section describes the heterogeneity among immigrant students by focusing on how they differ according to their birth region. Analyses of school performance across region group within racial/ethnic, poverty, and English proficiency groups can be found in Appendix A and a list of the countries in each regional grouping can be found in Appendix B.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Immigrant students from different regions of the world have very different characteristics (Table 12, Figure 12).**

Students from the Anglophone Caribbean and Caribbean South American countries, where English is the dominant language, have very low rates of LEP (7.7% and 0.9%), equal to or lower than native-born students. The highest LEP rates are found among students whose native languages are Spanish and Chinese, with almost one half of the Dominican, Latin American, and Chinese students in need of English language instruction. In the middle group, where LEP percentages range from 10 to 34, students from Western Europe and the former USSR have relatively low rates of LEP (both under 15%) while those from South Asia, and West Asia/North Africa fall on the higher end. Students from the Latin American and Caribbean regions also have the highest poverty rates—above 90%. The lowest rates of poverty, in some cases lower than native-born, are found among immigrants from the three European regions (former USSR, Other Eastern Europe, and West Europe), and notably, East Asians differ from their Asian neighbors with a low rate of 73.2% eligibility, despite including groups from less developed countries, such as Burma and Cambodia.[xi] Most of the racial distributions by region of birth are not surprising; the overwhelming majority of students from Africa and the Caribbean are black, those from Latin America are Hispanic, those from Eastern Europe and the former USSR are white, and those from Asia are Asian. A few regions are more diverse. For example, while almost 44% of the students from Western Europe are white, roughly 30% are black and 11% Hispanic. Another group of students with greater racial diversity are those from West Asia and North Africa, 67.8% of whom are considered white and 26.9% Asian.

Figure 12: Percent Limited English Proficient by Birth Region

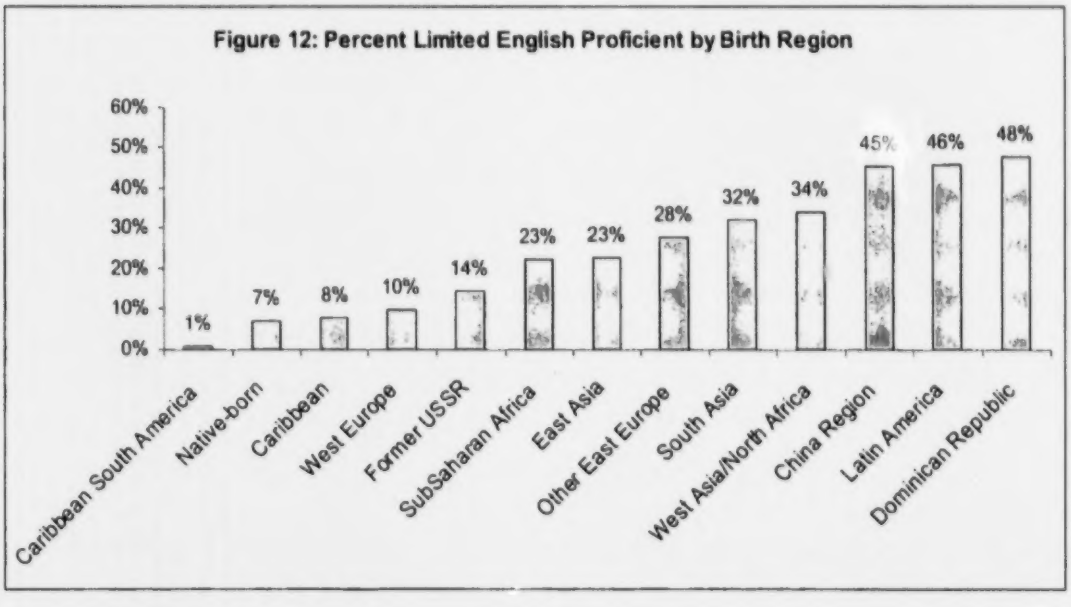

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Table 12: Characteristics of Immigrants by Birth Region, 1999-2000

		Percentage of students who are:					
	% of students	Limited English Proficient	Poor	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Native-born	84.2%	7.0%	85.6%	7.9%	37.9%	39.0%	14.8%
Immigrant	--	30.1%	89.7%	26.9%	19.3%	36.0%	17.5%
Former USSR	1.5%	14.4%	70.6%	1.2%	0.8%	0.2%	97.7%
Other East Europe	0.7%	27.9%	82.4%	1.2%	0.7%	1.1%	96.8%
West Europe	0.4%	10.0%	73.7%	16.0%	28.6%	11.2%	43.8%
China Region	1.2%	45.3%	90.0%	98.3%	0.1%	1.0%	0.5%
East Asia/Pacific	0.7%	22.9%	73.2%	88.5%	7.2%	2.3%	1.8%
South Asia	1.7%	32.2%	90.8%	95.5%	0.8%	1.0%	2.2%
W. Asia/N. Africa	0.5%	34.0%	88.5%	26.9%	3.6%	0.9%	67.8%
SubSaharan Africa	0.4%	22.5%	92.7%	6.6%	84.3%	5.4%	3.0%
Dominican Rep.	2.9%	48.0%	98.4%	0.2%	0.8%	98.8%	0.1%
Caribbean	2.3%	7.7%	93.1%	7.5%	88.6%	2.6%	0.8%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.8%	0.9%	93.6%	48.0%	40.1%	9.2%	1.3%
Latin America	2.7%	45.7%	94.1%	2.1%	2.2%	94.1%	1.5%
All (658,591)	100%	10.7%	86.3%	10.9%	35.0%	38.5%	15.2%

- **Students from Caribbean and Latin American regions perform lower on standardized tests, and have higher rates of participation in special education, than students from European and Asian regions (Table 13, Figure 13).**

Students from Latin America, SubSaharan African, and Caribbean countries score lowest on the reading and math tests. In fact, students from most of these particular regions score lower than the native-born. Within these regions, the lowest scores are found among Dominicans, and their scores are very far below the next lowest group. In reading, for example, Dominicans score an average of -0.358 and are followed by Caribbean students who average -0.221. At the opposite end of the test score distribution are the European and Asian groups. Students from the European and Asian regions also have relatively low rates of full-time special education participation—less than or equal to roughly 2% of each group. The rates are twice as high among students from the Caribbean and Latin American regions, and students from the Dominican Republic have the highest participation rate (4.3%), though none exceed the rate among native-born students. The differences between the regions are not as extreme with respect to part-time special education.

Figure 13: Reading Test Scores by Birth Region

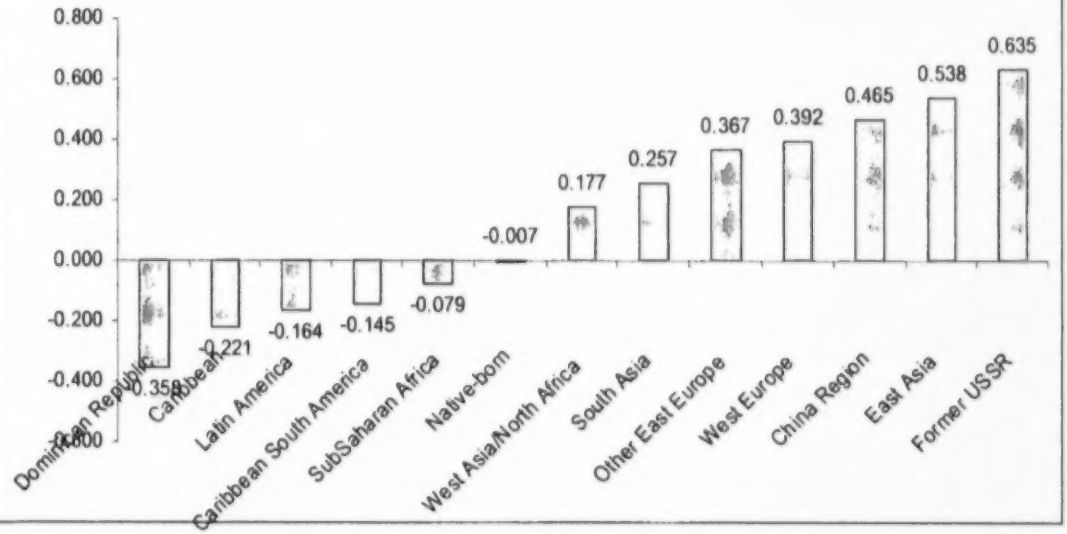

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Table 13: School Performance of Immigrants by Birth Region, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took math test
Native-born	84.2%	5.9%	7.2%	-0.007	93%	-0.008	68%
Immigrant	–	2.5%	3.1%	0.041	94%	0.045	78%
Former USSR	1.5%	1.0%	3.1%	0.635	80%	0.839	80%
Other East Europe	0.7%	1.4%	2.5%	0.367	64%	0.520	64%
West Europe	0.4%	1.8%	3.6%	0.392	83%	0.414	83%
China Region	1.2%	0.8%	2.2%	0.465	50%	0.807	64%
East Asia/Pacific	0.7%	1.2%	1.7%	0.538	68%	0.729	68%
South Asia	1.7%	1.2%	1.9%	0.257	60%	0.439	60%
W. Asia/N. Africa	0.5%	2.4%	3.4%	0.177	59%	0.325	60%
SubSaharan Africa	0.4%	2.1%	2.8%	-0.079	70%	-0.101	71%
Dominican Rep.	2.9%	4.3%	3.4%	-0.358	61%	-0.438	85%
Caribbean	2.3%	3.5%	3.7%	-0.221	87%	-0.287	89%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.8%	3.4%	5.0%	-0.145	95%	-0.125	95%
Latin America	2.7%	2.8%	3.5%	-0.164	57%	-0.258	78%
All (658,591)	100%	5.4%	6.5%	0.000	89%	0.000	91%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.

Summary of Profile and Consistency with Previous Research

While the descriptive statistics presented here may be refined when multivariate analyses are undertaken, they suggest several important differences between native-born and immigrant students and among immigrants. Some of these patterns have been explored in previous research and others have not.

Nativity

Comparisons of the native-born to immigrants as a whole reveal that while foreign-born students have greater potential needs, there is also a high level of need among the native-born, many of whom are poor and even LEP in New York City. Prior research on immigrant children has also found that they have greater risk factors than native-born students, including emotional stress, poverty, residential mobility, overcrowded housing, and limited English proficiency (Hernandez and Charney 1998; Vernez and Abrahamse 1996). Based on poverty rates alone, one might expect that New York City's native-born students would have low school performance and that immigrants would fare even worse.

Yet, the school outcomes of immigrant students is not strikingly poor in comparison to their native-born peers. Foreign-born students outperform native-born students on traditional measures of academic achievement: immigrants have higher reading and math scores than native-born, despite their higher poverty rates, limited English skills, and newness to the U.S. schooling system. These findings are consistent with previous literature that has documented higher performance among immigrants and has attributed it to their greater aspirations and positive attitudes about schooling (e.g. Gibson 1988; Caplan, Whitmore and Choy 1989; Suárez-Orozco 1989; Kao and Tienda 1995; Zhou and Bankston 1998).

The findings also reveal interesting patterns by poverty, race/ethnicity, and English Proficiency. Perhaps the most striking pattern is the reversal in the relative test scores of native-born and foreign-born students within racial/ethnic subgroups. Native-born students score *higher* than immigrants within nonwhite racial/ethnic groups, indicating that the overall success of foreign-born students reflects their higher shares of Asians and whites, groups with comparatively high scores. This finding is consistent with that of a quantitative study of test score differences among first, second, and third generation immigrants in the 8th grade (the first generation is equivalent to the foreign-born). Using the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Kao and Tienda (1995) found that among Asian, Hispanic, and black students, the native-born generally scored higher on tests, but among white students, the foreign-born students scored highest.

Another important pattern in these analyses is that differences in school performance between the poor and the nonpoor and across racial/ethnic groups are far greater than differences between the native-born and the foreign-born, indicating that poverty and race/ethnicity outweigh nativity in terms of their relationship to school outcomes. Additionally, being LEP increases students' participation in special education and lowers their test scores. The most disadvantaged group, as indicated by a high rate of participation in special education and low test scores, is the native-born students who have not yet mastered the English language (approximately 40,000 students fall into this category).

Recent Immigrants

In New York City, foreign-born students who are recent immigrants have different experiences than those who are not. They have very low test scores and low rates of participation in special education programs when compared to immigrants who have been in the school system longer, and to native-born students.

The existing literature and anecdotal evidence on how length of residency influences the performance of immigrant students offers mixed expectations. Recent immigrants are new to the school system, language, and culture, suggesting that their performance in school would initially suffer then improve as they acculturate. Yet much of the literature finds a negative correlations between immigrants' length of residency in the U.S. and their academic performance, health, and aspirations (e.g. Waters 1999; Dewind 1998; Hernandez and Charney 1998; Vernez and Abrahamse 1996; Matute-Bianchi 1986).[xii] The theory developed to explain these findings is that recent immigrants have an initial optimism that motivates them

to perform well in school, but that diminishes as they acculturate to U.S. society. The preliminary statistics presented in this paper suggest that, at least with respect to test scores, this theory does not hold. Within some racial/ethnic groups and on some tests (e.g. Hispanics in reading), however, recent immigrants score higher than nonrecent immigrants, although far fewer of them take the tests. The one other study that uses New York City student data to examine the performance of recent immigrants compared to all other students (the study groups native-born and nonrecent immigrants together) finds similar results for recent immigrants from certain countries (Dewind 1998).

Birth Region

School performance across the region groups tends to reflect the differences in background characteristics, but not always. Latin American and Dominican students, who are generally poor , LEP, and Hispanic, have high rates of participation in special education and very low test scores. Dominican students present significant educational needs in comparison to the other regional groups, while students from the former Soviet Union—the least poor, predominantly white, and English proficient students—do exceptionally well on standardized tests. Students from the China region have above average school performance, despite their high poverty and LEP rates. Additionally, the Caribbean groups perform exceedingly poorly even though they are not more economically disadvantaged (according to crude measures of free lunch eligibility) and not more LEP than the other groups. These regional differences are largely consistent within poverty and English proficiency subgroups, and since most of the regions are racially homogenous, within racial/ethnic subgroups as well (these analyses can be found in Appendix A).

Students' birthplace differences in school performance have been consistently found in previous literature, and have been attributed to factors other than human capital and familiarity with the English language (e.g. Kao 1999;Dewind 1998; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; 2002; Waters 1999; Matute-Bianchi 1986). For instance, Portes and Rumbaut (1996; 2001) point to differences in the reception experienced by the various ethnic groups in the United States, including the acceptance or discrimination they experience in the labor market, the degree of support they receive from the government, and the economic and social vitality of their ethnic communities. These explanations may be particularly applicable to the plight of students from the Dominican Republic, a group found to have consistently poor school performance in New York City elementary and middle schools.

Conclusion

This statistical profile reveals large differences between immigrant and native-born students and even larger differences among the foreign-born according to their birthplace and newness to the school system. Additionally, the socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and language skills of immigrant and native-born students play a role in shaping their school experiences. Thus, school systems receiving inflows of immigrant students are likely to face challenges that depend critically upon the sending countries and backgrounds of their incoming students and that require targeted policies and programs.

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Appendix A: Differences in School Performance of Region Groups Within Poverty, Racial/Ethnic, and English Proficiency Subgroups

- **Dominican Students score below average on tests even when they are above the poverty level.**

With respect to special education, most of the differences between the regions remain the same within poverty subgroups (see Table A1). And none of the regions has higher special education participation rates than native-born. Additionally, the overall ranking of the 12 regions on test scores remains almost the same for the poor and the nonpoor, with some regions switching only one or two places in rank. The Dominican students remain the lowest performing group overall and for both poverty groups. In fact, they are the only group with below average test scores among the nonpoor. The relationship between poverty and test scores also varies by region, as indicated by smaller differences between the poor and nonpoor in some regions (e.g. the Dominican, the Caribbean, and East Asia) and larger differences in others (e.g. Latin America, and China). Additionally, the nonpoor of the lowest performing regions still score below the poor from the highest performing regions (USSR, China, and East Asia).

Table A1: School Performance by Poverty, Nativity, and Birth Region, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average math test	% Took math test
Poor							
Native-born	83.6%	6.7%	7.4%	-0.148	93%	-0.141	94%
Immigrant	--	2.7%	3.2%	-0.057	67%	-0.040	77%
Former USSR	1.2%	1.3%	3.7%	0.433	75%	0.666	75%
Other East Europe	0.6%	1.4%	2.4%	0.247	62%	0.409	62%
West Europe	0.4%	2.4%	3.6%	0.212	82%	0.258	83%
China Region	1.2%	0.8%	2.3%	0.317	48%	0.677	63%
East Asia/Pacific	0.6%	1.4%	2.0%	0.410	65%	0.628	65%
South Asia	1.8%	1.2%	1.8%	0.179	58%	0.374	58%
W. Asia/N. Africa	0.5%	2.7%	3.3%	0.072	57%	0.238	58%
SubSaharan Africa	0.4%	2.4%	3.0%	-0.068	70%	-0.106	71%
Dominican Rep.	3.4%	4.3%	3.4%	-0.359	63%	-0.419	86%
Caribbean	2.5%	3.7%	3.7%	-0.220	87%	-0.289	89%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.9%	3.5%	5.2%	-0.155	95%	-0.129	95%
Latin America	2.9%	3.0%	3.5%	-0.211	58%	-0.275	78%
All (n=538,028)	100%	6.1%	6.7%	-0.134	88%	-0.125	91%
NonPoor							
Native-born	89.6%	1.6%	5.7%	0.675	97%	0.662	97%
Immigrant	--	0.9%	2.8%	0.733	84%	0.808	83%
Former USSR	2.8%	0.4%	1.8%	0.988	92%	1.148	92%
Other East Europe	0.7%	1.8%	3.4%	0.708	84%	0.856	84%
West Europe	0.7%	0.3%	4.0%	0.826	89%	0.817	89%
China Region	0.8%	0.4%	1.3%	1.264	75%	1.728	76%
East Asia/Pacific	1.2%	0.8%	1.1%	0.853	77%	0.997	76%
South Asia	1.0%	0.6%	1.9%	0.764	80%	0.882	80%
W. Asia/N. Africa	0.3%	0.0%	5.2%	0.697	75%	0.814	75%
SubSaharan Africa	0.2%	0.6%	3.3%	0.416	78%	0.367	81%
Dominican Rep.	0.3%	2.3%	5.3%	-0.189	67%	-0.335	79%
Caribbean	1.0%	1.6%	3.0%	0.117	86%	-0.024	88%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.3%	1.9%	4.1%	0.153	95%	0.100	95%
Latin America	1.0%	1.8%	5.7%	0.417	66%	0.251	78%
All (n=98,382)	100%	1.5%	5.3%	0.682	95%	0.679	95%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.

- **Within racial/ethnic groups, immigrant students from some regions outperform native-born.**

Table A2 provides school performance for each racial/ethnic group overall, by nativity and by the largest birth regions (selected regions represent at least 90% of all students in the racial/ethnic group). Within racial/ethnic groups, there are large differences across the regions, many of which mirror the differences found in Table 11, primarily because of the racial homogeneity within regions. For instance, students from China and East Asia have lower rates of participation in special education than students from the other Asian regions. The stark differences between Asians from South Asia and those from the Caribbean (both of similar racial descent) highlight the role that region can play in school performance, irrespective of race/ethnicity, and interestingly, of LEP (recall that Caribbean South Americans have very low LEP rates while Chinese and South Asians have higher LEP rates). The more revealing comparisons in this table are made between region groups and the native-born within racial/ethnic subcategories, reversing patterns found earlier (recall from Table 6 that within racial/ethnic groups, foreign-born have lower rates of participation in special education and lower test scores than native-born). For example, Asians who are from Caribbean South America and West Asia/North Africa have higher rates of participation in both full- and part-time special education than the Asian native-born students. And, though the Caribbean South Americans who are black do not participate at higher rates than native-born students who are black, they do have higher test scores than their black native-born counterparts. Note also that comparisons across races can be made for the two racially diverse regions—Caribbean South America and West Asia/North Africa—revealing, for example, that Asian students from the Caribbean score higher (or less poorly) than the black students, both of whom have similar rates of LEP and poverty.

Table A2: School Performance Race/Ethnicity, Nativity and Birth Region, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took math test
Asian							
Native-born	61.0%	1.3%	3.4%	0.541	96%	0.806	96%
Immigrant	–	1.2%	2.3%	0.306	69%	0.530	64%
South Asia	14.5%	1.1%	1.8%	0.260	45%	0.445	45%
China Region	10.5%	0.8%	2.2%	0.464	50%	0.804	64%
East Asia/Pacific	6.0%	0.7%	1.4%	0.623	66%	0.855	66%
Caribb. S. America	3.5%	2.7%	5.1%	-0.120	96%	-0.051	96%
W. Asia/N. Africa	1.2%	2.9%	3.2%	0.192	59%	0.350	60%
All (n=71,801)	96.7%	1.3%	3.0%	0.462	82%	0.709	84%
Black							
Native-born	91.3%	7.1%	6.6%	-0.174	94%	-0.250	95%
Immigrant	–	3.5%	3.7%	-0.214	87%	-0.289	85%
Caribbean	5.9%	3.7%	3.7%	-0.254	87%	-0.333	89%
Caribb. S. America	0.9%	4.1%	4.9%	-0.167	95%	-0.227	95%
SubSaharan Africa	1.0%	1.8%	2.4%	-0.103	70%	-0.147	70%
All (n=230,435)	99.1%	6.8%	6.3%	-0.177	94%	-0.254	94%
Hispanic							
Native-born	85.2%	6.8%	7.9%	-0.202	90%	-0.180	92%
Immigrant	–	3.6%	3.4%	-0.266	60%	-0.352	82%
Dominican Rep.	7.6%	4.3%	3.3%	-0.358	61%	-0.440	85%
Latin America	6.5%	2.8%	3.4%	-0.189	56%	-0.284	77%
All (n=253,744)	99.3%	6.3%	7.3%	-0.210	85%	-0.208	91%
White							
Native-born	81.7%	3.1%	8.6%	0.557	97%	0.560	96%
Immigrant	–	1.4%	3.2%	0.529	74%	0.701	74%
Former USSR	9.7%	1.0%	3.0%	0.641	80%	0.844	80%
East Europe	4.2%	1.3%	2.6%	0.369	64%	0.533	64%
W. Asia/N. Africa	2.2%	2.2%	3.4%	0.182	59%	0.338	60%
West Europe	1.2%	1.6%	4.4%	0.603	79%	0.658	79%
All	99.1%	2.8%	7.6%	0.552	92%	0.583	92%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers. Selected regions represent at least 90% of all students in the racial/ethnic group.

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- **Fully English Proficient students from the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries score below average on tests.**

For the most part, the regional differences in special education participation and test scores are the same within the LEP and fully English proficient subgroups (see Table A3). Students from the European and Asian regions tend to have lower rates of participation in full-time special education and higher test scores than students from the Latin American and Caribbean regions. In fact, the Caribbean and Dominican students who are fully English proficient still score below average on their tests, while all other immigrant groups score above average. There are also large differences in the percentages of LEP students from the regions who take the exams, from 8% of East Asians to 36% of Dominicans, reflecting the differences between the regions in terms of their recent immigrant status.

Table A3: School Performance by English Proficiency, Nativity and Birth Region, 1999-2000

	% of students	% Full-time special education	% Part-time special education	Average reading test	% Took reading test	Average Math test	% Took math test
Limited English Proficient							
Native-born	61.1%	15.9%	9.1%	-1.311	63%	-1.036	81%
Immigrant	–	4.3%	2.8%	-1.242	22%	-0.842	52%
Former USSR	1.7%	3.6%	5.0%	-1.093	15%	-0.415	17%
Other East Europe	1.5%	2.5%	2.2%	-1.087	10%	-0.838	10%
West Europe	0.3%	3.8%	3.8%	-1.029	17%	-0.693	28%
China Region	5.0%	1.3%	2.1%	-1.179	12%	-0.007	40%
East Asia/Pacific	1.5%	1.5%	1.8%	-0.930	8%	-0.283	10%
South Asia	4.3%	2.4%	1.4%	-1.138	11%	-0.850	11%
W. Asia/N. Africa	1.3%	4.6%	2.6%	-1.246	11%	-0.960	13%
SubSaharan Africa	0.8%	3.0%	1.7%	-1.286	20%	-1.019	23%
Dominican Rep.	11.2%	6.8%	3.7%	-1.275	36%	-0.971	86%
Caribbean	1.5%	4.0%	2.1%	-1.247	18%	-1.328	48%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.1%	8.3%	4.2%	-1.181	33%	-0.795	33%
Latin America	9.8%	4.4%	2.8%	-1.263	23%	-0.877	67%
All (n=63,856)	100%	10.7%	6.3%	-1.289	39%	-0.947	65%
Fully English Proficient							
Native-born	87.6%	5.2%	7.0%	0.040	95%	0.039	95%
Immigrant	–	1.8%	3.3%	0.173	88%	0.266	88%
Former USSR	1.4%	0.6%	2.7%	0.677	90%	0.875	90%
Other East Europe	0.5%	1.0%	2.7%	0.430	85%	0.583	85%
West Europe	0.4%	1.6%	3.6%	0.419	90%	0.449	89%
China Region	0.7%	0.4%	2.3%	0.668	85%	1.148	86%
East Asia/Pacific	0.6%	1.1%	1.7%	0.580	86%	0.766	86%
South Asia	1.3%	0.6%	2.1%	0.343	84%	0.521	84%
W. Asia/N. Africa	0.4%	1.3%	3.9%	0.270	84%	0.428	84%
SubSaharan Africa	0.4%	1.8%	3.1%	0.009	86%	-0.022	86%
Dominican Rep.	1.7%	1.9%	3.1%	-0.022	82%	0.020	85%
Caribbean	2.4%	3.5%	3.8%	-0.205	93%	-0.242	93%
Caribbean S. Amer.	0.9%	3.4%	5.0%	-0.142	96%	-0.123	96%
Latin America	1.6%	1.5%	4.2%	0.069	85%	0.125	86%
All	100%	4.8%	6.6%	0.058	94%	0.070	94%

Notes: Test scores are measured in z-scores and include all 3rd through 8th graders who took the tests. Z-scores are calculated by subtracting the average score for all test takers from each student's score and dividing by the standard deviation of scores for all test takers.

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Appendix B: List of Countries in Region Groups

Former USSR: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Karakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, USSR, Uzbekistan

Other East Europe: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Yugoslavia

West Europe and Other: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

China Region: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan

East Asia/Oceania: Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea (North and South), Laos, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Island, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu, Vietnam

South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan

West Asia/North Africa: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

SubSaharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Republic of South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Dominican Republic: Dominican Republic.

Caribbean: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, British West Indies, Cuba, Dominica, French Antilles, French West Indies, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Nether Antilles, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & Grenada, Trinidad & Tobago

Caribbean South America: French Guiana, Guyana, Surinam

Latin America: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

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[i] The term "immigrant" is used synonymously with the term "foreign-born" to refer to all students not born on U.S. soil. Technically, our data identify foreign-born who may include a small number of children board abroad to U.S. citizens.

[ii] These data are being used in several studies by the authors on immigrant students. See Ellen, O'Regan, Schwartz, and Stiefel (2002) for a more detailed description of the data.

[iii] Since passage of the Emergency Immigrant Education Act in 1984, the federal government has provided financial aid to states with large numbers of recent immigrants. To receive the grant, a school or district must have a minimum of 500 recent immigrant students, representing at least three percent of total enrollment. Thus, data identifying students as recent immigrants are maintained by the Department of Education.

[iv] The regions contained in the tables are loosely based on a classification developed by the New York City Planning Department (1996). For a technical appendix on how the 12 regions used in this paper were selected, contact authors. Appendix B provides the list of countries in each of the 12 regions.

[v] Of the 192 states, 179 are independent nations as recognized by the U.S. State Department. Two of them are coded as the Former Yugoslavia and USSR, old country codes that were used prior to the dissolution of these nations. Another 13 are semi-sovereign states (e.g. Hong Kong and Macau) and territories of nations (e.g. Bermuda and French West Indies).

[vi] Data notes: a) Students are identified as Limited English Proficient if they score at or below the 40th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery. Students who score above the 40th percentile will be referred to as Fully English Proficient. b) The Department of Education identifies five categories of race/ethnicity: white, black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American. Although these categories combine race, ethnicity and linguistic origin, we use the term "race/ethnicity" for simplicity. c) Poor students are those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Children in homes that are up to 130% of the federal poverty level are eligible for free lunch and those in homes between 130% and 185% of poverty are eligible for reduced-price lunch. In 1999, the poverty level was $17,029 for a family of four. The free lunch eligible are the majority, with 82% of foreign-born and 78% of native-born students falling in this category. Note that five percent of the entire sample, and subgroups therein, are missing free lunch data.

[vii] Attendance rates were also examined but not included in this paper because the differences were so small: attendance rates rarely varied by a few percentage points for each comparison.

[viii] In spring 2000, the Department of Education administered the McGraw Hill Test of Basic Skills (CTB) in reading, comprehension and language and the California Achievement Test (CAT) in mathematics to 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th graders and the State English Language Arts (ELA) and State Mathematics tests to 4th and 8th graders. Student test scores were normalized to z-score by subtracting the mean score in the grade for all students and dividing by the corresponding standard deviation.

[ix] Students classified as LEP are exempted from testing for three years after entry into the school system but are required to take the tests thereafter. Over half of the students who do not take the reading exams and approximately 40 percent of the students who do not take the math exams are LEP.

[x] These numbers can be found by subtracting: -0.091= -0.148- (-.057) and -0.790=-0.057-.0.733.

[xi] Note that the inclusion of Japan in this region—a highly developed nation—does not contribute to their low rates of poverty. In fact, the Japanese students (many of whom are black and English speaking, perhaps children of American military personnel) have a higher than average poverty rate (81%) for this region.

[xii] Some studies discuss both the effect of residency on immigrant students over time and changes in performance across generations, such as from the first to the second (e.g. Waters 1999).

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